



HEARING AID WITH A MICROPHONE SYSTEM AND AN ANALOG/DIGITAL CONVERTER MODULE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 It is known to shield the microphone system of hearing aids against electromagnetic interference and to configure them with respect to acoustic resonance chambers. It is further known about hearing aids processing digital audio signals to use an analog/digital converter directly subsequent to the microphone system.

German patent 195 457 60 proposes configuring the analog/digital converter with
10 the microphone system into one unit in the hearing aid and to shield both jointly against electromagnetic interference.

This design incurs a number of drawbacks:

- Each further development of analog/digital converters on one hand and of the microphone system on the other hand requires a new design of the combined, integral unit,
- 15 -- The advantage of one and the same analog/digital converter being combinable with various microphone systems, or that one and the same microphone system might be combined with different AD converters, is precluded as regards lowering the manufacturing costs of the individual components,
- When designing the microphone system, the analog/digital converter, which is
20 integral therewith, must also be considered in the light of the acoustic resonance chambers directly coupled to the microphone.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed toward a hearing aid device that eliminates or minimizes at least some of the aforementioned disadvantages in the art.

In accordance with the present invention, the direct mechanical assembly of the analog/digital converter on the microphone system comprises a shielding case and remedies the above-noted drawbacks. Moreover, no practical drawbacks are sustained regarding electromagnetic shielding because the acoustic resonance spaces and the design of microphone/digital-analog-converter will not be degraded, while shielding remains optimal. Such a result is attained in a preferred embodiment, wherein the analog/digital converter is modular and is encapsulated, per se, in a shielding case which, when assembled, on the microphone system's shielding case can be placed snugly with vanishing conduction gaps, on the microphone system's shielding case so as to be at its potential.

In a further preferred embodiment, the microphone system and the analog/digital converter not only are each modular and undetachably joined, but the two modules may also be joined detachably.

In order to fully exploit the advantage of the design of the invention, in particular its modular aspect and the flexible use of one and the same analog/digital converter module for different applications, in particular different microphone systems, the invention includes an analog/digital converter module fitted with at least two analog inputs of different input impedance and/or different signal gains.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and further features of the invention will be apparent with reference to the following description and drawings, wherein:

Figs. 1a - 1d schematically show the design, with different shielding concepts, of a unit of a microphone and an analog/digital converter,

5 Fig. 2 schematically and in simplified manner shows a cross-section of the apparatus of the invention, and

Fig. 3 schematically shows a preferred embodiment of a module of an analog/digital converter of the invention.

10 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figs. 1a-1d schematically shows modes of the microphone system with a directly subsequent analog/digital converter of an (omitted) hearing aid. In Fig. 1a, a microphone system 1 is shielded against electromagnetic interference by a shield 3. The analog/digital
15 converter 5 is mounted, in accordance with the present invention, on the shield 3 of the microphone system 1. In Fig. 1b, a further shield 7 is mounted at the output side of the analog/digital converter in particular also for the purpose of suppressing any electromagnetic interference from the output of the analog/digital converter being fed into its analog input. This feature is optimized in Fig. 1c in that the analog/digital converter
20 5 is, per se, encapsulated in a shield 7a. The illustrated variant is preferred because it allows modular use of the analog/digital converter 5 regardless of how and where further shielding is provided. In Fig. 1d the shield 7b of the analog/digital converter 5 is interrupted at one side, where shielding is completed by the shielding of the microphone

system 1. In this instance, the outside shape of the microphone system, i.e., its shield 3 and the design of the analog/digital converter 5, are interrelated.

Fig. 2 illustratively and schematically shows the design of the combination of the microphone system and analog/digital converter. The shielding case 13 of the microphone system 10 is fitted with an acoustic input 11 and supports a flexible sheet 15 coated with conducting paths 17 of the digital output of the converter. The analog/digital converter 16 is encapsulated in a thin shield 17. The thin shield is preferably a metallized layer 17c of the sheet 15 and sits snugly enough on the shielding case 13 to be at the same electrical potential as the case 13. As is schematically illustrated in Fig. 2, the analog/digital converter is contained within the shield 17. Also, the analog input I_A of the converter passes through both the sheet 15 and the corresponding zone of the shield 17 into the case 13 of microphone system 10.

In a preferred manner and, as shown in Fig. 3, especially as regards the modular use of the analog/digital converter of the invention, the converter shall be basically applicable with different input configurations. Illustratively, it may have at least two inputs I_1 and I_2 of different input impedance, Z_1 and Z_2 , and/or with different input gains, G_1 and G_2 , and where called for with different analog/digital conversion functions. As a result, the analog/digital converter allows flexible application in different microphone systems.

While the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated and discussed hereinbefore, it is understood that the present invention is not limited thereto. Rather, the invention is defined by the claims attached hereto.



HEARING AID WITH A MICROPHONE SYSTEM AND AN ANALOG/DIGITAL CONVERTER MODULE.

[The present invention relates to a hearing aid defined in the preamble of claim 1
5 and to an analog/digital converter module as defined in the preamble of claim 4.]

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

It is known to shield the microphone system of hearing aids against
10 electromagnetic interference and to configure them with respect to acoustic resonance
[chambers.] chambers. It is further known about hearing aids processing digital audio
signals to use an analog/digital converter directly subsequent to the microphone system.
[The] German patent 195 457 60 proposes configuring the analog/digital converter
with the microphone system into one unit in the hearing aid and to shield both jointly
15 against electromagnetic interference.

This design incurs a number of drawbacks:

- Each further development of analog/digital converters on one hand and of the
microphone system on the other hand requires a new design of the combined, integral unit,
- The advantage of one and the same analog/digital converter being combinable
20 with various microphone systems, or that one and the same microphone system might be
combined with different AD converters, is precluded as regards lowering the
manufacturing costs of the individual components,

-- When designing the microphone system, the analog/digital converter, which is integral ~~[with it]~~ therewith, must also be considered in the light of the acoustic resonance chambers directly coupled to the microphone.

5

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The ~~[objective of the]~~ present invention is ~~[to eliminate those drawbacks. This objective is attained by the hearing aid of the initially cited kind as characterized by the features of claim 1.]~~ directed toward a hearing aid device that eliminates or minimizes at least some of the aforementioned disadvantages in the art.

In ~~[the insight of the]~~ accordance with the present invention, the direct mechanical assembly of the analog/digital converter on the microphone system ~~[comprising]~~ comprises a shielding case and remedies the ~~[above drawbacks and moreover]~~ above-noted drawbacks. Moreover, no practical drawbacks are sustained regarding electromagnetic shielding because the acoustic resonance spaces and the design of microphone/digital-analog-converter will not be degraded, while shielding remains optimal. Such a result is attained in a preferred ~~[embodiment in that]~~ embodiment, wherein the analog/digital converter is modular and is ~~[encapsulated per se]~~ encapsulated, per se, in a shielding case ~~[which when assembled]~~ which, when assembled, on the microphone system's shielding case can be placed snugly with vanishing conduction gaps, on the microphone system's shielding case so as to be at its potential.

In a further preferred embodiment, the microphone system and the analog/digital converter not only are each modular and undetachably joined, but the two modules may also be joined detachably.

In order to fully exploit the advantage of the design of the invention, in particular its modular aspect and the flexible use of one and the same analog/digital converter module for different applications, in particular different microphone systems, the invention ~~proposes~~ includes an analog/digital converter module fitted with at least two analog inputs of different input impedances and/or different signal gains.

~~The invention is elucidated below by embodiments shown in the drawings.~~

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and further features of the invention will be apparent with reference to the following description and drawings, wherein:

Figs. 1a - 1d schematically show the design, with different shielding concepts, of a unit of a microphone and an analog/digital converter,

Fig. 2 schematically and in simplified manner shows a cross-section of the apparatus of the invention, and

Fig. 3 schematically shows a preferred embodiment of a module of an analog/digital converter of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

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[Fig. 1] Figs. 1a-1d schematically shows ~~embodiment~~ modes of the microphone system with a directly subsequent analog/digital converter of an (omitted) hearing aid. In Fig. 1a, a microphone system 1 is shielded against electromagnetic interference by a shield 3. The analog/digital converter 5 is ~~mounted in the manner of the invention~~ mounted, in accordance with the present invention, on the shield 3 of the microphone system 1. In Fig. 1b, a further shield 7 is mounted at the output side of the analog/digital converter in particular also for the purpose of suppressing any electromagnetic interference from the output of ~~said~~ the analog/digital converter being fed into its analog input. This feature is optimized in Fig. 1c in that the analog/digital converter 5 is, ~~per se~~ per se, encapsulated in a shield 7a. ~~This embodiment~~ The illustrated variant is preferred because allowing it allows modular use ~~per se~~ of the analog/digital converter 5 regardless of how and where further shielding is provided. In Fig. 1d the shield 7b of the analog/digital converter 5 is interrupted at one side, where ~~its~~ shielding is completed by the shielding of the microphone system 1. In this instance, the outside shape of the microphone system, ~~is~~ i.e., its shield 3 and the design of the analog/digital converter 5, are interrelated.

Fig. 2 illustratively and schematically shows the design of the combination of the ~~inventions of~~ microphone system and analog/digital converter. The shielding case 13 of the microphone system 10 is fitted with an acoustic input 11 and supports a flexible sheet 15 coated with conducting paths 17 of the digital output of ~~said~~ the converter. The analog/digital converter 16 is encapsulated in a thin shield ~~17 which is complemented by~~ 17. The thin shield is preferably a metallized layer ~~indicated by~~ 17c of the sheet 15 and sits snugly enough on the shielding case 13 to be at ~~its potential~~. ~~As indicated in merely schematic manner,~~ the same electrical potential as the case 13. As is schematically

illustrated in Fig. 2, the analog/digital converter is contained within the shield 17. ~~Also shown but only schematically,~~ Also, the analog input I_A of ~~said~~ the converter passes ~~both~~ through ~~both~~ the sheet 15 and the corresponding zone of the shield 17 into the case 13 of microphone system 10.

5 In a preferred manner and, as shown in Fig. 3, especially as regards the modular use of the analog/digital converter of the invention, ~~said~~ the converter shall be basically applicable with different input configurations. Illustratively, it may have at least two inputs I_1 and I_2 of different input ~~impedances Z_1 and Z_2~~ impedance, Z_1 and Z_2 , and/or with different input ~~gains G_1 and G_2~~ gains, G_1 and G_2 , and where called for with different
10 analog/digital conversion functions. As a result, the analog/digital converter allows flexible application in different microphone systems.

While the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated and discussed hereinbefore, it is understood that the present invention is not limited thereto. Rather, the invention is defined by the claims attached hereto.



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DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR UTILITY OR DESIGN PATENT APPLICATION

☐ Submitted with Initial Filing

☒ Submitted after Initial Filing
(Surcharge (37 CFR 1.16(e)) required)

Attorney Docket No.: 32396

Application Number: 09/502,258

First Named Inventor: Christoph Wuersch

Filing Date: February 11, 2000

Group Art Unit: _____

Examiner Name: _____

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address, and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

HEARING AID WITH A MICROPHONE SYSTEM AND AN ANALOG/DIGITAL CONVERTER MODULE

the specification of which (check only one item below)

☐ is attached hereto,

OR

☒ was filed on (MM/DD/YYYY) February 11, 2000 as United States Application Number or PCT International Application Number 09/502,258 and was amended on (MM/DD/YYYY) _____ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment specifically referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR 1.56.

#3

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), or 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 365(a) of any PCT international application which designated at least one country other than the United States of America, listed below and have also identified below, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or any PCT international application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Prior Foreign Application Number(s)</u>	<u>Foreign Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)</u>	<u>Priority Claimed?</u>
International	PCT/CH00/00081	February 11, 2000	Yes

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint each of the following as my attorneys with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

Charles B. Gordon, Reg. No. 16923
William C. McCoy, Reg. No. 16885
Richard H. Dickinson, Jr., Reg. No. 18622
Thomas P. Schiller, Reg. No. 20677
David B. Deiona, Reg. No. 22841
Joseph J. Corso, Reg. No. 25845
Howard G. Shimola, Reg. No. 26232

Jeffrey J. Sopko, Reg. No. 27676
John P. Murtaugh, Reg. No. 34226
James M. Moore, Reg. No. 32923
David E. Spaw, Reg. No. 34732
Michael W. Garvey, Reg. No. 35878
Paul R. Katterle, Reg. No. 36563
Richard M. Mescher, Reg. No. 38242
M. David Galin, Reg. No. 41767

Address all correspondence to Customer Number 000,116.

Please direct all correspondence and inquiries to David E. Spaw at (216) 579-1700.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under 18 U.S.C. 1001 and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

(1) Inventor Name (sole): Christoph Wuersch
Signature: Chr. Wuersch
Date: 18.3.2000
Citizenship: CH
Residence (City, State, Country): Niederurnen, Switzerland
Post Office Address: Hauptstrasse 43, 8867 Niederurnen, Switzerland